

Draft Opening Remarks  
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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS AND MARKET ACCESS:  
TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNEP's Executive Director, I would like to welcome you to this symposium on Environmental Requirements and Market Access. I would like to thank the Capacity Building Task Force team from both UNCTAD and UNEP for organising this symposium, as well as thank all of you for responding to our invitation and making yourselves available.

The level of interest in this topic - as shown by the number of participants present today - is a testament to both the importance and relevance of environmental requirements and market access to the international community. In the face of pressing development challenges – first and foremost poverty reduction - and increased international environmental concerns, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, it is critical that we identify and seize opportunities where both development and the environment benefit. Increased market access for, and trade in environmentally-friendly products can be such an opportunity.

The objective of the symposium today is not only to draw attention to some of the capacity constraints developing countries encounter given the proliferation and increased complexity of environmental requirements and standards, but perhaps more importantly, to proactively explore how these countries can take advantage of new market opportunities created by these requirements and standards. For example, the recent CBTF initiative in East Africa has resulted in the development of a regional organic standard, which is the world's second regional organic standard after the European Union and the first ever developed in cooperation between public, private and NGO sectors. This common standard will facilitate regional trade in tripling the size of domestic market, boost organic trade and market development in the region, as well as raise awareness about organic agriculture among farmers and consumers. It is also a catalyst for a more unified negotiating position that will assist East African organic farmers gain access to export markets and influence international organic standard setting processes.

In order to achieve today's objective, I believe it is important that we openly and constructively share and confront our views on:

- Some of the major problems and capacity constraints developing countries face in complying with existing environmental requirements and standards. I hope we can learn from the experts' presentations, as well as from interventions from the floor looking at various developing countries' experiences, notably in the sectors of organic agriculture and electrical and electronic goods.
- Key elements/factors that have enabled developing country producers, companies, exporters and governments to fully exploit new market opportunities created by environmental requirements and standards. In addition to the recent successful CBTF experience in East Africa, I hope that we can hear other 'success stories' on other sectors and in different parts of the world.
- Important technical assistance needs, which can contribute to helping developing countries adopt and implement a pro-active (rather than reactive) approach to environmental requirements and standards, so that their needs and constraints are effectively addressed. I would encourage all of you to engage in this discussion and to share your views and experiences with capacity building efforts conducted to date.

Let me conclude by adding a few words on the joint UNEP/UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development. As some of you may know, this joint initiative started in 2000 and aims to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to effectively address issues at the interface of trade, environment and development. After two rounds of activities and country projects, we are now preparing for a third phase of activities focused specifically on environmental requirements and standards, and market access. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and state my appreciation for the generous financial support CBTF activities have received over the years, particularly from the European Union.

I believe that the difficult current state of WTO trade negotiations, increased international concerns about the impact of global warming, and interdependence of globalisation, climate change and poverty reduction amongst others, require a programme like CBTF to be focussed on strengthening the capacities of developing countries to integrate trade, environment and development objectives into national policy-making. The next round of CBTF activities will continue to work with national and international partners to focus on building developing country capacity to address constraints and capture opportunities offered by environmental requirements and standards, with a view to increasing market access, promoting environmental conservation, and reducing poverty. I hope that today's discussions will provide us with

further guidance on how to shape this next round of CBTF activities in order to best respond to developing country needs and expectations.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to our discussions and wish us all a very successful symposium. Thank you.